

**USDA-ARS-NPA  
Fort Collins, Colorado  
Policy Memorandum**

<b>DATE:</b>	<b>August 24, 2005</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Fort Collins Award Policy</b>
<b>NUMBER:</b>	<b>FM-05-003</b>
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b>	<b>Immediately Until Replaced or Superseded</b>

**1.     Purpose**

This document establishes the award policy for Fort Collins, Colorado (Research Units and Area Office).

**2.     Procedures**

- All awards (i.e. Performance, Quality Step Increases, Extra Effort) are to come into the Area Office for approval. Spot and Non-monetary (other than Time-Off when given as a Performance Award) will continue to be approved at the unit level. These awards must go through supervisory channels, with the final approval residing at the Area level.
- All employees who receive an outstanding rating for their performance are to be given either a Quality Step Increase (QSI) or performance cash award unless the employee is already at Step 10 of the grade and thus does not qualify for a QSI. A QSI is usually the most beneficial in the long term for the employee; however, a supervisor does not need to give the employee a choice. The rules governing QSI's and the impact on each employee's pay can be different; therefore, supervisors need to consult with our Personnel Office before awarding a QSI. Only one QSI in a 52-week period may be given.
- A performance award for Superior performance may be initiated at the discretion of the supervisor but is not mandatory. In giving any performance award the key is that performance bonuses are intended to recognize good performance throughout the full rating cycle.
- Extra Effort Awards are defined in the USDA Guide for Employee Recognition as recognition given for a specific outstanding accomplishment such as a superior contribution on a short-term assignment or project, an act of heroism, scientific achievement, major discovery or significant cost savings. Extra Effort Award may be given at any time as long as the contribution fits the criteria above. Dollar amounts are determined by applying the Non-Measurable Benefits Scale on page 12 of the

USDA Guide to determine value of benefits and application. This can also be found at the USDA website at [www.usda.gov/da/employ/recog.htm](http://www.usda.gov/da/employ/recog.htm). However, unless there is a strong justification to substantiate something different, we assume that normally the Value of Benefits for most support personnel (i.e. secretarial/clerical, wage grade, technicians, administrative support staffs, support scientists) will be Small/Moderate or Moderate/Substantial and Application will be Limited. For other positions (Category 1 and 4 scientist and Category 6 senior management positions, etc.), the Application will normally be assumed to be Broad. In both cases, an award amount in the Substantial/Extended level must have a strong justification. Also note that any award exceeding \$3000 is above the Area Director's signature authority and requires the Administrator's approval.

- Spot Awards are to be used to grant an immediate monetary recognition for one-time contributions (i.e. special project or task force) to the agency's mission or goals. They can range from \$50 to \$500. The award will be deposited to employee's account within 3 days from receipt of request at Headquarters. Employee will receive full amount of award.
- Justifications are required for awards over \$500. Justification for awards must clearly address how the employee's performance or contribution warrants the proposed award. Since an Outstanding rating required documentation of accomplishments, this can be used as the justification for the award. Please follow the Justification Outline in Appendix C of the USDA Guide for Employee Recognition for format.
- Extra Effort Awards and Spot Awards are separate from the performance rating of record. Time-Off Awards may be given for either performance or for a special effort. If time-off is given rather than cash, the value will not exceed the value of the comparable cash award. Neither Extra Effort nor Spot Awards are to be tied to the performance rating of record nor are Spot Awards to be tied to a long-term project.
- Supervisors are encouraged to use non-monetary recognition where appropriate. Sometimes items such as shirts, jackets, briefcases, etc. can be more appropriate in recognizing an extra effort than cash.

#### **4. Point of Contact**

For further information please contact the Deputy Area Director at 970-492-7001.

/s/

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